

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 44479

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 7902

FROM KEELEY

E.O.11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: US UG PFOR

SUBJECT: GENERAL AMIN'S POPULARITY

1. SINCE LEAVING KAMPALA I HAVE BECOME AWARE, FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH A NUMBER OF PEOPLE, THAT A VIEW GENERALLY AND BROADLY HELD ABOUT GENERAL AMIN IS THAT HE HAS STRUCK A SPARK IN THE BOSOM OF THE AFRICAN MASSES AND ENJOYS IMMENSE POPULARITY WITH THE "WANANCHI." HIS POPULARITY SEEMS TO GROW IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE DISTANCE FROM UGANDA OF THE MASSES IN QUESTION, AND, I MIGHT ADD, IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE DEGREE OF THEIR IGNORANCE ABOUT TRUE CONDITIONS IN UGANDA.

2. IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY TRUE THAT GENERAL AMIN'S POLICIES AND ACTIONS OF THE PAST YEAR HAVE BEEN HIGHLY PUBLICIZED ABROAD AND HAVE STRUCK A RESPONSIVE CORD AMONG BLACK AFRICANS FRUSTRATED BY THE LACK OF REAL CHANGE IN THEIR OWN CONDITIONS TEN OR TWELVE YEARS AFTER INDEPENDENCE. HOWEVER, WE SHOULD MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT JUST WHAT DEEP-SEATED PREJUDICES AMIN IS APPEALING TO, IN THE MANNER OF ANY DEMAGOGUE IN ANY OTHER COUNTRY. HIS POSTURE HAS BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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A MIXTURE OF NOTHING OTHER THAN PURE XENOPHOBIA AND PURE RACISM. I HAVE THE DEFINITE IMPRESSION THAT HE DOESN'T WANT ANY FOREIGNERS IN UGANDA FOR ANY REASON, AND COULD HE GET AWAY WITH IT HE WOULD EXPELL EVERYONE

WHO COULD NOT PROVE HE WAS INDIGENOUS BLACK UGANDAN. HE WILL PROBABLY SOON CONCLUDE THAT HE CAN GET AWAY WITH IT AND PROCEED TO KICK ALL REMAINING FOREIGNERS OUT. THIS WILL PROBABLY BE LOUDLY CHEERED ABOARD, AT LEAST INITIALLY. (HE WILL KEEP THE FOREIGN DIPLOMATS WHO ARE WILLING TO STAY; THEY PROVIDE A NICE AUDIENCE FOR HIS LECTURES.)

3. AMIN'S POLICIES ARE ALSO THOROUGHLY RACIST. IF ANYONE DOUBTS THIS HE NEED ONLY REVIEW THE COURSE OF EVENTS, THE SHIFTS AND CHANGES, PURSUED BY AMIN AFTER HE DECIDED TO EXPEL THE "NON-CITIZEN" ASIANS. AS EVERYONE WHO STUDIED THE MATTER KNOWS, THOUGH PUBLICITY OF THIS ASPECT HAS BEEN MEAGRE, AMIN IN THE END DEFINED "NON-CITIZEN" TO MEAN EVERYONE OF ASIAN RACIAL ORIGIN, EVEN THOSE WHO HAD BEEN GRANTED UGANDAN CITIZENSHIP BY THE UGANDAN GOVERNMENT. HE WANTED THE ASIANS OUT; THE "NON-CITIZEN" CLAIM WAS A SMOKE-SCREEN TO MAKE THE ACTION APPEAR LEGAL, IF STILL NOT HUMANITARIAN. A COUNTRY WHICH EXPELS ITS OWN CITIZENS IS A FAIRLY UNIQUE CASE IN MODERN HISTORY, BUT AMIN ENJOYS IMPLEMENTING "FIRSTS."

4. THE HUMAN, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF AMIN'S ACTIONS OF THE PAST YEAR ARE WELL KNOWN TO OBSERVERS OF UGANDA, BUT THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A WIDE-SPREAD CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE ABOUT THE TRUE FACTS OF THE SITUATION. IRONICALLY, OR PERHAPS LOGICALLY, THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED THE MOST FROM AMIN'S COMBINATION OF XENOPHOBIA AND RACISM HAVE NOT BEEN THE FOREIGNERS OR CITIZENS WHO WERE NOT BLACK. MOST OF THESE HAVE AT LEAST ESCAPED THE COUNTRY WITH THEIR LIVES AND BODIES INTACT. THE TRUE SUFFERERS HAVE BEEN THE THOUSANDS OF MEMBERS OF THE UGANDAN ELITE WHO HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED IN THE PAST TWO YEARS PLUS AND THE HUNDREDS OF OTHERS WHO HAVE FLED INTO EXILE. AND THE TEN MILLION UGANDANS WHO HAVE REMAINED BEHIND

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HAVE HAD TO SUFFER THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES, FOR EXAMPLE THE EIGHT-FOLD INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF THEIR BASIC FOOD STAPLES (CAN WE IMAGINE AN INFLATION OF THAT DEGREE IN ONE YEAR?), AND THE UTTER DETERIORATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND THE GOVERNMENT'S MEDICAL SERVICES. REGARDING THE SUGAR SHORTAGE, GENERAL AMIN SAID, IN SELF-EXONERATION, THAT UGANDANS DID WITHOUT SUGAR BEFORE THE COLONIALISTS INTRODUCED IT, SO THAT CAN LEARN TO GET ALONG WITHOUT IT AGAIN. THE LAST TIME IN HISTORY I CAN REMEMBER SUCH AN OUTRAGEOUS STATEMENT ON THIS GENERAL TOPIC WAS MARIE ANTOINETTE'S ABOUT SUBSTITUTING CAKE FOR BREAD.

5. IF ONE WERE INCLINED TO BE PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT SUCH SITUATIONS -- OR PERHAPS CYNICAL WOULD BE A BETTER WORD -- ONE COULD COMFORT HIMSELF WITH THE THOUGHT THAT THE UGANDANS WILL JUST HAVE TO SUFFER FOR AWHILE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF GETTING THEIR DESTINY INTO THEIR OWN HANDS EXCLUSIVELY, WHICH IS NOT A BAD GOAL IN THE ABSTRACT. IF THEY WANT TO DO IT, OK, LET THEM DO IT, IT'S ONLY THEY WHO WILL HAVE TO SUFFER FOR AWHILE. MAYBE THAT'S THE ONLY WAY IT CAN BE DONE, WITHOUT MODERATION OR GRADUALISM -- JUST KICK OUT ALL THE FOREIGNERS AND DO IT OURSELVES; IT WILL BE BAD FOR AWHILE BUT THEN EVERYTHING WILL BE OK. IN MY VIEW, THIS IS SHORT-SIGHTED AND THEREFORE WRONG. AMIN HAS SET UGANDA BACK A DECADE AT LEAST, PERHAPS A GENERATION, IN MOST SPHERES OF HUMAN AND NATIONAL DEVELOPEMTN, AND WITH THE ACCELERATION OF EVENTS IN THE PRESENT DAY, THAT MEANS THAT UGANDA WILL NOT ONLY NEVER CATCH UP TO THE ADVANCED COUNTRIES, BUT SHE WILL NOT EVEN CATCH UP TO THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CLUB OF THE POOR, WHICH IS SAD INDEED FOR A COUNTRY THAT HAD THE POTENTIAL OF UGANDA IN 1971.

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